



THERE is nothing worse than seeing your favourite band break up, only for them to reform years down the line and you know it will never, ever be the same.

Well, prepare for a similar feeling with *Dangerous Driving*.

The Three Fields Entertainment offering is the next *Burnout* game in all but name. The studio is made up from ex-members of Criterion Games. They even call it a "spiritual sequel".

But 11 long years has passed since the last full-fat *Burnout* game. The gaming world has moved on... a lot.

You'll notice the *Burnout* feel right from the start. It has a lot of the same race modes and mechanics as well as a similar sense of speed as you get behind the wheel of cars ranging from an SUV to a F1 beast.

The over-riding goal is to go fast by earning boosts for driving on the wrong side of the road or doing high-speed passes. However, if you hit

#### Dangerous Driving

Xbox One, PS4 and PC £29.99

another car or kiss the barrier you'll be flying through the air in an epic smash.

You get to take on a few race modes from the starting point-to-point. You have to smash up as many other races as you can in a set time.

There are time attack laps where you need to boost non-stop to beat the clock.

Then there is a cops-and-robbers mode too, which is fun if a little frustrating at times.

But issues start to sneak in as you have to work your way through set track lists for each car.

There are six vehicle campaigns but you can't just jump into any car you want at any point. That's a bit of a kill-joy — no one wants to be stuck in the same car for five back-to-back races.

It slows the whole game down and makes the experience more of a grind. On top of that the game also has no soundtrack. That is an odd move when you hark back to the *Burnout* games. They had some rocking sounds.

So, you had better fire up Spotify unless you are happy hearing the scream of an engine having its neck ringed non-stop. The game also suffers from the same empty vibe as *Three Fields* Entertainment's other titles, *Danger Zone 1* and *2*.

It all feels a little unfinished and lifeless. *Dangerous Driving* can be fun if it fills that *Burnout*-shaped hole in your life, but it doesn't move the 11-year-old formula along enough. Ultimately, it felt more like a tribute act instead of the full-blown arena comeback tour it should have been.

STUART CULLEN



## THE JOY OF WRECKS

#### Giga Wrecker Alt

Switch, Xbox One and PS4 £20.99

JAPANESE studio Game Freak is virtually synonymous with the Pokémon franchise but they have some other tricks up their sleeve.

*Giga Wrecker Alt* blends platforming with a healthy slice of puzzle-solving and a dash of metroidvania to make an over-the-top anime game that will test your grey matter as well as smash things up.

Your smashing success is key because you have to collect the bits of junk from battles to make objects that can get you into new areas or solve puzzles.

The main tale is set in a post-apocalyptic 2032 where machines rule and humans are virtually wiped out. You are Reika, a young girl who loses her arm in a battle only to get a robot one that gives her new powers. It's all a bit far-fetched but a strong cast of characters carries it off.

There is a good-size map, with the standard metroidvania hook that you'll see areas to explore but can't get into them without new skills so you'll need to go back later. It looks lovely with a real cartoon vibe and has a solid soundtrack.

The physics system is a bit hit and miss and the camera can be a pain as it suddenly zooms out, leaving you as a tiny spec on the screen.

But it is a neat challenge that shows Game Freak has more than one string to the bow.

STUART CULLEN



## Creative team's down with kids

FIGHTING the Plague was child's play, according to Asobo Studio narrative designer Sebastian Renard.

That might draw a laugh from some gamers, but Sebastian insists the key to success is seeing the game through the eyes of its young stars, Amicia and Hugo.

Sebastian, below, told STUART CULLEN: "It forced us to imagine the story as told through the eyes of a child. It sounds like a great concept, but it was one that actually took some time to do well — to find the right tone especially when you don't have children yourself."

"I think it was just the time necessary to integrate them, and let them live their own life. From this point, it brought something fresh and touching to the game."

"Their spontaneity, their struggle to exist as children in a dying world that wants to take them down with it, made the little moments of peace shine even brighter."

The game also highlights family values. Sebastian added: "The bond is important enough that it influenced the overall choices in terms of design, story and art. We've built everything around the fact that Amicia will have to take care of her brother, and how they will have to work together in order to survive."

"As for the writing, I defined Amicia's inner struggles. She is the daughter of a lord and she's becoming an adult but she still struggles to find her place in the family. She struggles with her relationship with her mother, but also with her brother, who she doesn't know since they grew up separated."

"The story is all about how she's going to handle the fact that she's now, to some degree, Hugo's substitute mother, but Hugo is reluctant to immediately trust her. Meanwhile, they are threatened on all sides."

The studio was also keen to use medieval France as the backdrop — and are delighted with the results.

Sebastian said: "It started with a lot of research, which over time led us to all these ancient writings, tales and legends."

"Medieval times were interesting as

they offered a gritty exoticism, especially as we wanted to offer a realistic vision of this time — something you don't often see in video games, where this period mostly serves as a background to fantasy stories."

"In Bordeaux, like many other cities, the past is still alive through old buildings. Sometimes you find yourself in an antique narrow street, when no one's around, and you can feel it in the air."

"And the south-west of France... The Hundred Years War had started in 1337, which is ten years before the beginning of our story, and the Guyenne region was at the centre of the conflict between the English and the French. It was too tempting not to use this in the game."

The final piece of the jigsaw was the rats. Sebastian said: "They are a constant threat. They lurk in the dark... and the sun always sets eventually."

"Rats don't really care about who stands in front of them. They kill, just as the Plague killed, be it the rich or the poor, or the Inquisition soldiers that are after the kids. But with the right tools, you will be able to use the rats against your enemies, even though you're not the only ones to have adapted to the presence of this threat. It just takes some good thinking and planning."

"Amicia is not a trained fighter, so she has to use her brain to stay alive." He added: "We have 5,000 rats on screen at once. I'm not a programmer so I don't know all the tricks, but rats were definitely a long-term workshop for our engineers. The rats needed to work the way we wanted so that we could use them in our puzzles."

"They had to feel real, cool and terrifying, while maintaining a good frame rate on screen. Not a small challenge considering the amount of bugs and unpredictable behaviours it can create, but the guys did an amazing job, and it immediately caught people's attention."

"They actually came after we picked the 14th Century as our setting. They were the obvious physical incarnation of the Plague — the intersecting mechanics of light versus rats versus humans."

that makes you think and strike like the movie hero.

The frenzy was sparked even further by a brief trailer showing some game action. However, we reckon the headline news

is that some of the original movie cast will be lending their voices to the game — Ian McShane, of *Lovejoy* fame, and Fringe's Lance Reddick.

There is no word on whether Keanu Reeves will reprise his lead role as Wick.

MORTAL Kombat 11 is a chart hit, now we hear the movie reboot is in pre-production. Last year Warner Bros revealed the screenplay is by Greg Russo, and it will be directed by Simon McQuaid.



● CAPCOM is bringing the original *Devil May Cry* to the Switch. It launched on PS2 back in 2001 as the first of a "new" breed of hack-and-slash classics. It has since been

remastered and ported to a number of machines so the jump to Switch makes sense. Why you don't get the second and third games makes less sense.



● JOHN Robertson fans could see DOUBBLE. The Aussie comic's Dark Room show is at Replay Expo Glasgow on June 8-9 then Resonate Total Gaming on July 20-21. If you



## THE best fantasy tales and legends are mixed with real life — and Asobo have gone full horror on the Black Death with A Plague Tale: Innocence.

The French studio has created a story of two siblings trying to survive during the Hundred Years' War and avoid the Plague.

The game starts off well enough. Amicia is a young girl with lofty dreams of becoming a knight. Her younger brother, Hugo, has an illness that no one can cure and he has been locked away from the world.

One day Amicia goes boar hunting with her father and things take a turn for the worst — we're talking 0 to 100 in six seconds.

You lose your dog down a sink hole. You return home to find the Inquisition forces want to take Hugo.

There is only one solution — take Hugo and go on the run.

But they are trying to out-run the soldiers and an invisible menace — the Plague — which unleashes hordes of man-eating rats. Loads of them. Loads.

As tales go, the core story is a dark coming-of-age tale. It is all about how Hugo and Amicia bond and how they work out what family really means and how far you are prepared to go to protect them.

Gameplay is a blend of stealth and puzzle-solving with a few light

#### A Plague Tale: Innocence

Xbox One, PS4 and PC £44.99

combat sections thrown in along the way. The key, though, is to think like a youngster who is discovering each issue for the first time and working out the best way to attack it.

It is not easy — if you are spotted by an enemy then, on most occasions, it will end with you having to start over again.

Or even worse, you can wander too far from the light and become rat food.

The light is the key to beating the hordes. It helps you gain the upper hand as you get a suit of abilities during the game — from firebombs to an acid bomb.

Everything has a role within the game which keeps your concentration levels high.

The puzzles are never too hard. They are not sign-posted but are built to be solved with one of your abilities.

If you don't like rats, then stay away. There are loads of rats. Loads.

It is fun, if a little twisted, to use them for your benefit.

If they block your path, then you can throw a stone at a light and the little blighters go charging off into the darkness and you can move on.

Throughout the game you'll also get to craft equipment and get a handful of upgrades that can improve your ability to carry things as well as how quietly you walk.

However, it never seems like

the resources are limited so you don't have the extra worry of thinking about how to use them or preserve them.

Graphically, the game has a striking realism but the lighting system is the star of the show. You'll spend most of your time being in the dark, or lighting up your way forward with dancing shadows.

Then there are the rats. There are loads of them. Loads. And it isn't nice when they are crawling all over you as you wriggle through a tunnel. The sound backs up that feeling of dread as they squeal and claw at the ground around you. It adds to an epic backdrop of noise, complemented by solid voice acting. Amicia and Hugo definitely steal the show on that score.

There are very few gripes, but the fact that the game never really pushes back may frustrate a few people. Most will think it hits that sweet spot where you can just enjoy the journey and tale being told while scoring small victories along the way. The AI can also be a bit dumb — literally — as the lip sync during cut scenes has a tendency to be a bit off.

This is a dark, twisted and occasionally horrific game but it has a heart thanks to its two young stars.

Asobo's decision to have two young leads is a winner. You bond with them. This is a well-polished story-driven game that is a bit different from the norm. And there are rats.

STUART CULLEN



## NEW MUSIC

By Jim Gellatly

#### SHEARS

WHERE: Edinburgh. FOR FANS OF: Chvrches, Billie Eilish, Tove Lo.

JIM SAYS: It must be around 10 years ago that I first stumbled across Rebecca Shearing.

I was tipped off that a young singer from Ayrshire was doing big things online. She'd clocked up 30million views and more than 170,000 subscribers on YouTube.

She recalled: "I was 15 when I started uploading. People started requesting songs and I saw it as a fun way to practise singing and playing piano. I stopped uploading a few years ago so I could concentrate on my own music."

Despite early recording deal offers she chose to stick to her studies. Rebecca told me: "We had a different view on the type of music I should make."

"Labels wanted to change my style and appearance in a way I was uncomfortable with. I decided to go to university instead."

She went to Edinburgh Napier to study Popular Music and added: "I've no regrets. I was able to expand my critical thinking and what I choose to write about."

"I also met a lot of the people I'm working with now at university, and I wouldn't be without them. I wouldn't be making the music I'm making now as a teen and I'm very happy where I am, who I'm working with and having control over my career."

I finally got the chance to see Rebecca in the flesh at the Electric Fields festival in 2014. Performing with Stanley Odd, she was outstanding — filling in for usual vocalist Veronika Elektronika.

She already knew the band's rapper Dave Hook, aka Solareye, as he's a lecturer at Napier. She said: "It was exciting to play some festivals and headline shows."

"This is how I properly met Samson who now produces me."

I was reintroduced to Rebecca in September when she made a low-key appearance supporting Slights at King Tut's in Glasgow.

It took me a wee while to twig as she was billed as SHEARS. I think that was a working title for her solo project, but she's stuck with it and has finally released her stunning debut single Circle Line.

It's a perfect introduction to what she's about — a fresh slab of classy electro pop. The track was produced by Samson and mixed by Grammy-nominated Canadian Matty Green, whose credits range from Dua Lipa and Lady Gaga to the latest Weezer album.

Rebecca said: "Circle Line is about being stuck in a loop, realising and acknowledging that you're in the loop, but going back around anyway regardless of what it might do to you. It's about never learning."

After making her "official" live debut at last month's Wide Days music convention in Edinburgh, SHEARS plays her first headline show at Sneaky Pete's in the capital on June 12. She's also confirmed to showcase at XpoNorth in Inverness in July.

MORE: imshears.com ● Jim presents a weekly showcase of New Music on Amazing Radio, Sundays, 2-4pm.

amazimradio.com

jimgellatly.com

PHOTO CREDIT: Trisha Ward.

Watch a video of the band at: thescottishsun.co.uk